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ABSTRACT

This issue, the second in a three-part series leading up to International Literacy Year in 1990, examines innovative mass efforts that reach out to the large numbers of people who have been bypassed by traditional approaches. The eight articles are the following: (1) "Towards an Agenda for Literacy" (H. S. Bhola) reports on developing an agenda for literacy promotion among nongovernmental organizations at a meeting of the International Task Force on Literacy; (2) "Mountain after Mountain" (Valerie Miller) draws out the lessons that Misyon Alfa, the national literacy program of the Catholic Church in Haiti, offers to other national-level nongovernmental efforts; (3) "Where There's a Will..." (Sonja Fagerberg-Diallo) looks at the literacy efforts of the Association for the Renaissance of Pulaar, a nongovernmental organization in Senegal; (4) "The Community Classroom" (Nacha Mallon) describes the writer's experience working with the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee to provide an alternative model of primary education; (5) "Dreams Come True" (Sondra Stein) explains the challenge facing adult literacy in the state of Massachusetts; (6) "The Service Center Approach" (Jim Hoxeng) examines how literacy service centers can help programs in areas as diverse as health, agriculture, and income generation; (7) a brief report describes the Young Literacy Professionals Institute; and (8) a message from Federico Mayor, the Director-General of Unesco, discusses the International Literacy Year. (KC)

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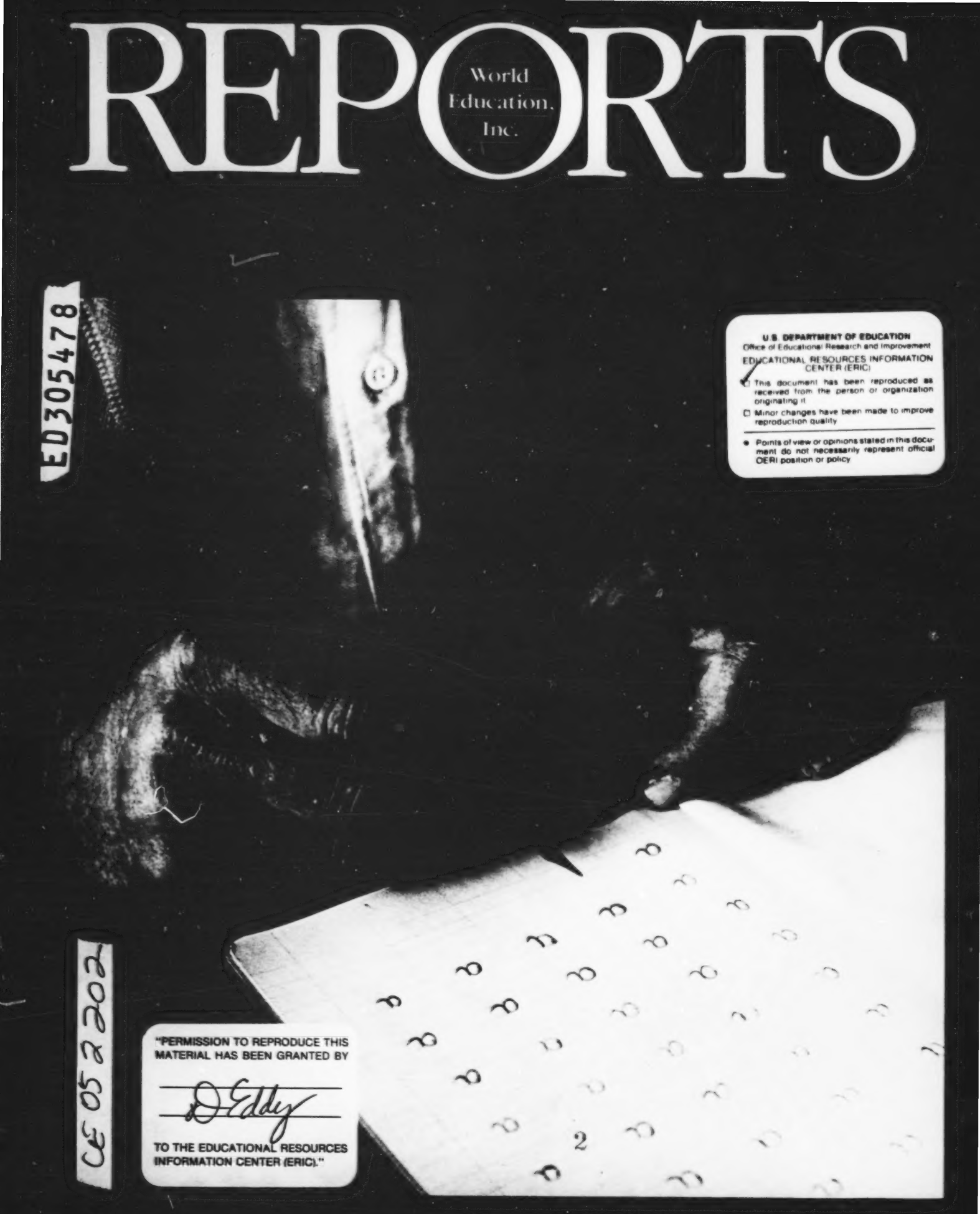

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World Education

Editorial

This issue of **Reports** is the second in a three part series leading up to International Literacy Year in 1990. The first of this series, *Literacy and the Learner*, looked at literacy from the inside out, beginning with definitions of literacy that stemmed from the individual and extended out to encompass her or his community. Now, we turn our lens the other way around to examine innovative mass efforts that reach out to the large numbers of people who have been bypassed by traditional approaches.

Non-governmental organizations or NGOs are vital to these efforts. H.S. Bhola notes the unique values and limitations that such organizations bring to the promotion of literacy in a series of observations from a meeting of the International Task Force on Literacy. Two very different programs featured in this issue illustrate the contribution of NGOs to adult literacy efforts and also the constraints under which they work. Valerie Miller, author of *Between Struggle and Hope*, a vivid account of the Nicaraguan literacy campaign, examines a national-level program of the Catholic Church in Haiti during a time of political strife. From a vastly different perspective, Sonja Fagerberg-Diallo writes from Senegal of an association whose literacy efforts are focused on encouraging a sense of cultural identity among speakers of the Pulaar language.

Few non-governmental organizations provide alternatives to primary education; however, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee or BRAC is offering a nonformal primary education program to hundreds of poor, rural communities that the government has not had the resources to serve. Nacha Mallon, a specialist in childhood education who worked with BRAC on this program, highlights the ways in which it could serve as a valuable model for governmental efforts.

Finally, we look at ways governments and non-governmental organizations can work together to offer adults more and better educational opportunities both in this country and overseas. Sondra Gayle Stein makes a clear case for a deeply rooted "literacy problem" even in the post-industrial, service economy of the state of Massachusetts, USA. She describes a unique government agency in Massachusetts that is trying to strengthen the state infrastructure for adult literacy while providing support to local literacy organizations without making them dependent on the state and severing their connections with the communities they serve.

We wonder if literacy professionals in industrialized societies might not benefit from experiences in third world nations. After examining programs in Lesotho, Nepal and other countries, James Hoxeng has identified an innovative approach that provides materials development and training to a wide range of agencies from community-based organizations to government ministries. A similar approach could greatly enhance both government and non-governmental efforts in the United States.

We are grateful to Unesco, which has helped sponsor this issue, and to the many NGOs whose work formed the inspiration for our theme.

The Editors

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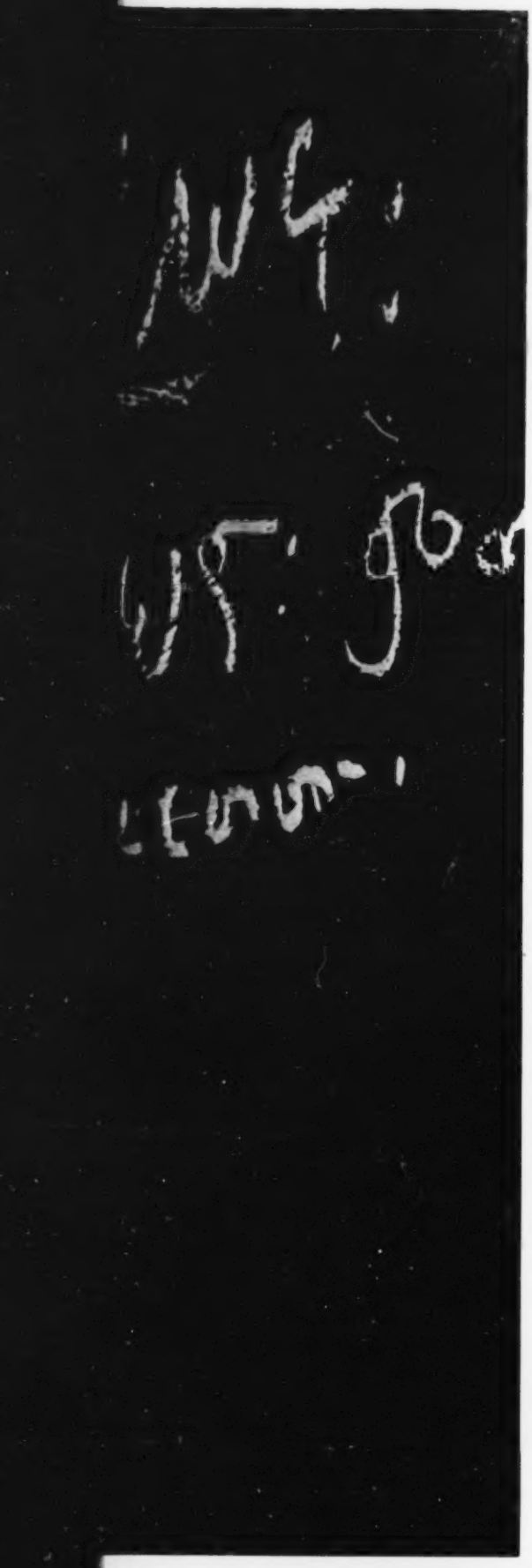


Towards an Agenda for Literacy

Old concerns and new commitments from a meeting of the International Task Force on Literacy

By H.S. Bhola

On December 7, 1987, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution declaring the year 1990 as International Literacy Year (ILY). In a report to the General Assembly, the Director-General of Unesco described ILY as a "summons for action", not a mere celebration, and he urged all nations to use the occasion as a launching pad for literacy promotion to achieve world literacy by the year 2000.

To achieve literacy for all by the year 2000 will take planning and action. As a lead agency for the United Nations, Unesco has established a Secretariat for ILY in Paris to encourage the collaboration of all member states. Under the four principles of functionality, participation, integration, and diversity, member states will work to promote literacy wherever children and adults have been bypassed by schools or opportunities for adult education.

The International Council for Adult Education in Toronto, Canada has taken the initiative to set up an International Task Force for Literacy that provides a forum and a structure for the mobilization of non-governmental organizations in support of literacy promotion. The first meeting of the Task Force was held in Toronto, Canada in the Fall of 1987. With program and funding support from the German Foundation for International Development, Bonn, a second meeting was held in West Berlin in June of 1988.

The issues discussed at the Task Force meeting in Berlin have broad implications, not only for the thirty or so delegates who attended the meeting, but for all those interested in literacy and development. What follows is my

account of the concerns expressed and the issues discussed.

NGOs in World Literacy

After forty years of work by both governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a realistic view of the role of NGOs in literacy and development has emerged. Discussion about the role of NGOs (specifically, private voluntary organizations) began at Unesco's first international conference of adult education at Elsinore, Denmark in 1949. In the shadow of World War II and with crimes of the Nazi state still fresh, the participants at Elsinore had been in favor of giving NGOs the greatest possible role in adult education and adult literacy. However, by the time the fourth Unesco international conference on adult education met in Paris in 1985, the organizational theme had shifted towards, "coordinating, networking and interfacing" among all agencies, both governmental and non-governmental. (For a more complete account of this shift, please see: H.S. Bhola, *World Trends and Issues in Adult Education*. Geneva: Unesco International Bureau of Education, in press.)

At this point in time, NGOs don't anticipate that the state will wither. NGOs can expect to supplement but never supplant the state effort. NGOs have certain unique strengths; in particular, they reflect traditional social values in ways the state cannot. They are innovative — testing means and ends in ways that government programs are unwilling or unable to do, and they provide outreach to marginalized groups and communities not included in government priorities.

On the other hand, NGOs are localized and can seldom mount national programs. They often lack professional talent and the managerial capacity to plan, implement and evaluate. Some are completely lacking in commitment. Others take fundamentalist ideological positions, drawing narrow circles of solidarity while fragmenting efforts for more comprehensive action. At the local level, NGOs are frequently co-opted by the state while internationally, private voluntary organizations can unwittingly weaken the state where the state is already weak. (*The Indian Journal of Public Administration* has devoted an entire issue to many of the aspects touched on above. For further information, see their special number on "Voluntary Organizations and Development: Their Role and Functions." Volume XXXIII, Number 3, July-September 1987.)

Why Literacy?— The Inevitable Question

The Task Force meeting in Berlin wanted to go directly to the questions: "When and how literacy?" However, the question "Why?" could not be avoided. Not all the participants were unwavering in their will. Among some, there was a crisis of convictions. Why literacy, when it is not a "felt need" of adults in a program? Why impose literacy on the unwilling? What is the use of literacy skills in a non-literate environment?

Such voices were few, however. A consensus did emerge. The challenge of education and development extension, it was well understood, was to go beyond people's "felt needs" and to help them fashion new needs for themselves. The participants did not view literacy teaching as an imposition but as "potential added" to individuals, which made them independent and equal to those of us who receive the advantages our societies offer. Literate environments, it was pointed out, did not descend from the heavens. They are created by teaching literacy and by establishing literacy-related institutions such as reading rooms and rural newspapers and by creating conditions within which the new literates can use their skills to make political and economic transactions.

We could not just sit and wait for adults to come and ask for literacy skills.

When Literacy?

The question "When literacy?" also brought different answers. The Task Force produced its share of collective cynicism about the ILY and about World Literacy by the year 2000. But it was quite clear that we could not just sit and wait for adults to come and ask for literacy skills. Similarly, a focus on the "literacization of cultures" rather than of people may be no more than an evasion of present possibilities, as such a discussion stretches universal literacy over a calendar of centuries rather than of decades or years.

The meeting made it clear that we have to learn to distinguish between *crisis* and *policy*. In crisis, the demands of the moment determine priorities —feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick. No one would ask victims of a disaster to learn to read first! But over the long term, those working in NGOs have to develop a framework of policy, of means and ends that set people free, empower them in relation to oppressive structures, and give them independent access to knowledge.

Literacy has to be *central*, though not necessarily primary, to all our educational and extension work. Our development efforts have to be designed on the assumption of literacy in due course. Literacy may not be offered to learners on the first day they join a group, or during the first week or even during the first month. But a conceptual neglect of and a long holiday from literacy teaching would mean the perpetuation of dependence.

How Literacy?

The question "How literacy?" raised a host of inter-related questions: What planning approaches? What modes of mobilization and delivery? What methodologies of teaching reading and writing? What methods of orientation and training of professional programmers, administrators, supervisors, teachers?

An important insight that quickly became common property of the group was that there is a clear connection between ideology and technology. Political cultures determine whether a society will declare a mass campaign or a national program. Popular education programs do not typically teach reading using the alphabetical method. Participatory evaluation is more than a technique of data collection. It is a worldview that refuses to separate facts from values and wants individuals to make their own constructions about their own reality. As a general answer to these many questions, pragmatic solutions were proposed. Literacy workers were asked to invent solutions in *context*, in *partnership* with others engaged in the same struggle, and in *participation* with those to be served.

Literacy has to be central to all our educational and extension work.

Expanding the Network

The participants at the Berlin meeting considered collaboration from all NGOs all over the world as well as from governments crucial to achieving a common goal. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) will function as the nexus for NGO activity, but the scope of the undertaking demands that leadership and action be decentralized.

Each NGO must establish its own agenda to complement and extend the initiatives of the ICAE. NGOs have to continue in their role as conscience keepers, flag bearers, and innovators. Those working in research and development have to ensure that they do not get separated from the lives of real people in real places engaged in daily survival. Those closer to the field have to draw strength from all possible sources

as they bring freedom, fairness and fulfillment to ordinary lives in ordinary places.

Peace and popular education are concepts worthy of life-long dedication. At the same time, the network must be hospitable to all those who share the vision of a fully literate world but not the vocabulary of literacy specialists. All NGOs engaged in education and development extension are *not* involved in literacy work. Some are doing literacy work, while others approach adult education and extension work without literacy. We must address these two groups differently. The latter group must be told that literacy work is in their interest. This group may be more responsive to our message than we might think. Already in countries like Botswana and Malawi (of which this writer has direct personal knowledge), extension workers have discovered how difficult it is for them to do their work with those who are not literate. They already support literacy work.

There is more to successful action than networks of information. Networks must collaborate in generating and sharing materials and other resources. As important, members in the network must be trained in the capacity to perform. That means training personnel in seminars and through distance education; and assisting in the development of instructional materials, as well as simple paper-and-pencil management information systems and methods for qualitative evaluation. The Task Force meeting highlighted the need to develop guidelines for: professionals in NGOs (both those who do literacy work and those who do not), school teachers in the formal system, volunteer teachers from village communities, university students, and secondary and elementary pupils.

While Unesco works with governments and the ICAE lobbies with and through NGOs, much remains to be done. Everyone needs to act — governments, NGOs, intellectuals, teachers and students, and religious and community leaders. Some governments, in addition to acting on their own behalf, can assist in developing regional networks of mutual assistance. India in Asia and Tanzania in Eastern and Central Africa are obvious loci of such networks.

As literacy becomes more and more universal, the definition of being literate will change.

At Sunrise on Day One of 2001

If all goes according to plan, what will it be like on January 1, 2001? Will illiteracy have disappeared from the earth? Will we send out an army to look for illiterates and find not one? Nothing could be more absurd than such a scenario. We should consider our work a success if most young people and adults have been brought into intimate contact with the culture of print and are no longer mystified by it; if most have crossed that threshold so that they can, on their own, go on practicing their skills; and if most feel that they are armed with the same instruments as the priest in the temple, the seller in the market, the policeman on the beat, and the agent of the state doing the work of the state.

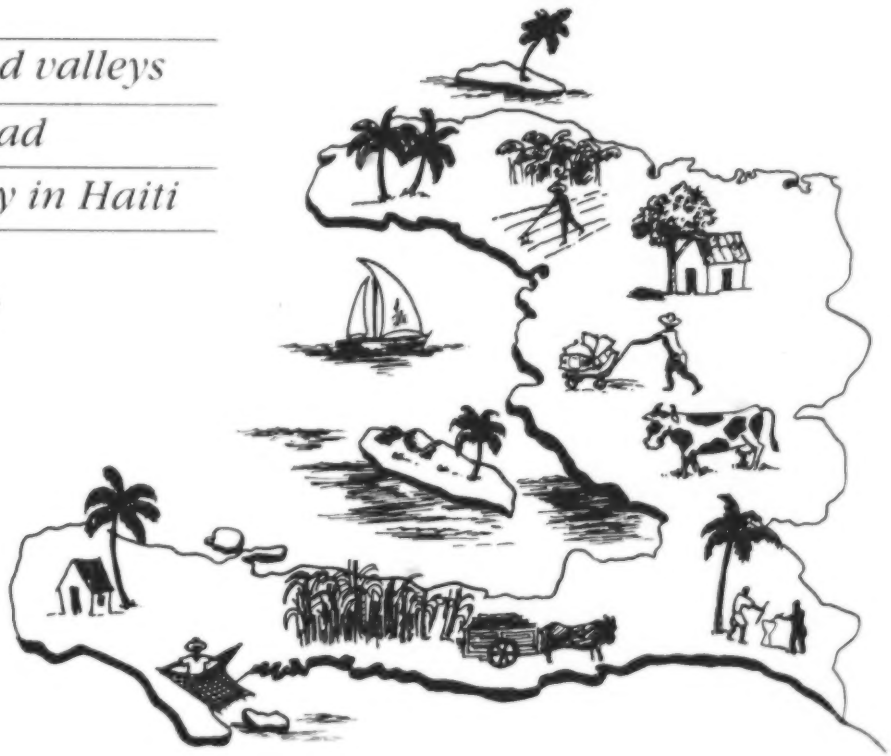
The task of literacy promotion will never be finished forever. New faces will appear. Some familiar faces will reappear, having relapsed into semi-literacy or illiteracy. Some will want to improve their present skills. There will also be new literacies. Even as literacy becomes more and more universal, the definition of being literate will change. New definitions will emerge. Once again, women and men will engage in the most human vocation — learning from each other to read better, to better read the world.

H.S. Bhola is professor of education at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. He consults on literacy with Unesco and has written several articles and texts on international literacy campaigns, programs and projects. Dr. Bhola also serves on the Board of World Education.

Mountain After Mountain

Peaks and valleys on the road to literacy in Haiti

by Valerie Miller



Haiti's landscape is marked by eroding hillsides and barren mountain ridges where poor peasant families struggle for survival. The sparse countryside belies the rich language spoken by its people, a language alive with proverb, pun, and metaphor. Yet across the nation, four out of five adults are illiterate.

In 1985, the Catholic Church began an unprecedented national literacy campaign — *Misyon Alfa* — emphasizing participation and economic development. Aimed at preparing people for democracy, *Misyon Alfa* focused on Creole reading and writing skills and tools of problem-solving, critical thinking and communication. *Alfa* hoped to expand people's use of their language and their capacity to improve their lives.

The program took place in the poorest country of the hemisphere, a country torn apart by ever-increasing political turmoil. Mounting such a campaign under highly adverse political conditions was an enormous challenge. A short, deceptively simple Haitian proverb evokes the scope of that challenge and the inevitable problems that it generated and confronted. "Behind every mountain," goes the saying "there are more mountains." Behind every challenge and problem, there always exist others. Solve one and another one appears.

In the article below, I provide a brief history of the program, examine some of the bigger mountains it has confronted, look at the internal and external forces that affected *Alfa*'s development and probe the dilemmas of working in a repressive political environment. My observations are drawn from four field visits to *Misyon Alfa* over the past two years and conversations with Didacus Jules and Bob Maguire, who accompanied me on those visits. The conclusions, however, are mine alone.

An Unprecedented Challenge

In the face of Haiti's ongoing political upheaval, *Misyon Alfa*'s goals were broad and ambitious. They involved the promotion of skills and attitudes conducive to fostering human dignity, social change, democracy and equitable development. Within approximately five years, the Catholic hierarchy hoped to reach up to three million people. In the history of world literacy programs, no other non-governmental body has attempted a challenge of this magnitude and vision.

Working parallel to, yet independent of government programs, the campaign first had to negotiate permission for its operation from the state. After a lengthy approval process spanning 1984-85, the Church set up a national organization with a triple-tiered management structure headed by the Bishops' Conference. An operational network extended from *Alfa*'s national offices to the diocesan and parish levels. The program first gained financial backing from organizations such as the Inter-American Foundation, Catholic Relief Services, *Développement et Paix* and Oxfam America.

With the fall of the Duvalier regime in February 1986, *Misyon Alfa* took on a more immediate and urgent role. As many Haitian church people pointed out, the ouster of the dictator did not guarantee either democracy or better lives for the poor. In order for democracy and development efforts to be meaningful, structures of power needed to be changed and people needed an understanding of the political system as well as tools for improving their livelihood and for participating in organizations that represented their common interests.

Political Context and Constraints

Village literacy monitors and students carried out their work in a society ripped apart by long years of inequity and government repression. Often, literacy monitors were community leaders and sometimes political activists. As such, they were targets for persecution. During the first year of the campaign, one literacy volunteer disappeared at the hands of the military; others were arrested and harrassed. The government labelled *Alfa* a communist threat. In 1987, promised elections ended in a massacre of voters. By mid-1988, the army had revoked the new constitution and, in a surprise June coup, eliminated all pretense of civilian rule. Repression increased dramatically. Another coup followed.

Political events severely affected the pace and operation of the literacy campaign. During times of violence and repression, fear reduced attendance and the need for caution influenced program operations. Still, communities continued to request classes.

Institutional Context and Constraints

The history and structure of the Catholic Church have played an influential role in the development of *Alfa* from its inception. Paradoxically, the Church has been *Misyon Alfa*'s greatest strength and at the same time its greatest weakness. In a country like Haiti, the Church was the only institution that could provide the necessary protective space and credibility for such a program. Yet the very nature of the Church's hierarchical structure and conservative character handicapped *Alfa*'s development.

Historically, the Church and the army, under the control of the dictator, have been the principal institutions of authority in the country — the Catholic Church being the only effective countervailing force to the military. Since the Pope's 1983 visit to Haiti in which he issued a dramatic call for social change, the Catholic hierarchy used some of that power to promote projects for the poor and encourage efforts opposing the regime.

The creation of *Misyon Alfa* represented the Church's commitment to the changes urged by Rome as did the crucial support it gave to the struggle against Duvalier. However, the Bishops were not always comfortable with or prepared for their new leadership roles. After the dictator's departure in 1986 and despite pressure from priests and nuns at the grassroots level, most of the hierarchy gradually withdrew their vocal support for the continuing civic struggle for democracy.

As a national effort, *Misyon Alfa* began to take on an identity of its own, eventually overshadowing other Church programs in budget and visibility. People and organizations began to look to *Alfa* for the moral leadership that the Bishops had exhibited in the struggle against Duvalier. Despite staff consultation with the Catholic hierarchy on *Alfa*'s role in such matters, this situation led to certain tensions and an apparent fear by some of the Bishops that their own authority and credibility were being eroded and their control over events weakened. Mistrust grew as a consequence.

Church structures and organizational culture also affected the operation of *Misyon Alfa*. While clearly a non-governmental body, the Church as an organization is not a traditional NGO focused on grassroots development. It is a national institution with a hierarchy and structure organized for religion, education and socialization. By nature, it is a body that demands unquestioning obedience to higher authorities and operates with a top-down decision-making structure that is slow and ultimately incompatible with a program like *Alfa*.

To head the effort, the Bishops initially chose several priests who possessed both vision and experience in development and education. But for the program and its staff to function effectively, they needed a relative amount of autonomy, flexibility and speed in decision-making. *Alfa*'s cumbersome triple-tiered structure of management and administration mitigated against this possibility, delaying many key decisions about hiring and financial disbursements.

Probably the most crucial aspect of institutional culture that affected the campaign was the ambivalence that some Church leaders felt toward *Alfa*'s emphasis on community participation and decision-making. Unused to dialogue or debate, many Bishops and priests felt uncomfortable with the idea of grassroots participation and democratic process and feared its consequence on the Church's hierarchical authority. In May 1988, the Bishops abruptly suspended campaign operations, calling for a reorganization of program and personnel.

The suspension left many staff members and participants at best confused and, at worst, disillusioned, hurt, and angry. Government pressure and a combination of issues around internal authority evidently were among the factors that influenced the Bishops. Active lay people and priests saw the decision as directly threatening their community credibility as well as the legitimacy of the entire Church. They feared that participants would feel deceived and abandoned when their aspirations for further learning and leadership were frustrated. In the months since May 1988, those fears have often proved valid.

Lessons in Brief

Given the political and institutional constraints affecting the program during its 1986-87 operations, *Misyon Alfa*'s achievements in basic learning and organization must be considered remarkable. Some seventy thousand Haitians enrolled in the first two phases

of the campaign, with an estimated thirty-two thousand completing classes and approximately forty-five hundred monitors and support staff mastering leadership skills. Independent research and evaluations judged the acquisition of literacy and language skills as good. These achievements were in large part due to the dedication, creativity and problem-solving capacity of the staff at both national and local levels. Over the course of the program, new staff members had greatly enriched *Alfa*'s central administrative and operational bodies, and despite certain internal problems and deficiencies, the quality of their overall work and professionalism had grown significantly.

The experience of *Misyon Alfa* raises many important questions especially about the viability and potential of national literacy programs that are conducted without government involvement in contexts of state repression. As might be anticipated, answers are mixed. Haiti's experience indicates that literacy efforts such as *Misyon Alfa*, which focused on problem solving and leadership-building, can produce partial results. Very modest goals can be met and small steps toward change taken. Drawbacks, however, are clear. The political and institutional space available to such operations is unpredictable and may be quite short-lived. If, as a consequence, participants' expectations go unsatisfied, a combination of frustration, anger, and apathy can be the result.

Many Haitians believe that the challenge of democracy and justice merits the risk involved in such literacy endeavors and indeed demands it if human dignity and equitable development are ever to be attained. However, in order to function within adverse political climates, their experience also suggests that external forces must be constantly assessed and that certain conditions internal to the program be present.

At a minimum, these conditions include:

- solid backing from an institution that can mobilize people and provide the program and its participants with some protection and legitimacy before the regime;
- a complementary vision of literacy methods and goals;
- necessary funding from respected international agencies;
- adequate time and preparation for systematic planning; and
- a competent, creative professional staff and program leadership who are extraordinarily sensitive to the interests of the sponsoring institution's higher authorities and to the delicate balance that must be maintained; a situation that requires people who are willing to work within such parameters, to tread lightly and be ready, when necessary, to make practical compromises.

The Haitian experience to date demonstrates that national efforts can attain some limited achievements for certain brief periods of time. However, that realization is tempered by the recognition that systemic and institutional constraints restrict and inevitably block program success. In countries marked by sharp inequities, full literacy and participation can only be attained with the support of a government committed to economic and social change. Present events in Haiti indicate that both institutional and political constraints may be placing insurmountable barriers in the path of *Misyon Alfa*. Behind the mountain ridges, *Alfa*'s participants and their neighbors are waiting.

Steps Toward a New Future: One Village's Experience

One scene from the literacy campaign provides a picture of the spirit and potential that *Misyon Alfa* tapped following Duvalier's departure. In a remote village in the dry central plateau, Rene Deshommes (a pseudonym) serves as literacy monitor. Selected by his neighbors to lead their classes, he smiles a lot. Energy and enthusiasm sparkle in his eyes. A sharecropper, he raises what corn he can on the parched land; his wife sells their produce in the nearby market town twice a week, walking two hours each way. They have four living children. René and his wife have heard about a regional peasant organization that provides credit and services to village groups. They wonder whether their community could join. Next week, René will raise the idea in the literacy center.

Work is hard. Yet, after tending his field, René finds time to teach his two to three hour afternoon class. Twenty-four students are enrolled; average attendance is fifteen. With only four years of formal schooling, Rene is an impressive teacher. He holds class in the community-built literacy center — a lively place filled with music, dance, discussion, and learning. One day's class began like this: fifteen people singing a song about literacy while dancing and clapping out the beat in unison, softly stomping and swaying in the dust. Music and dance completed, they sit on log benches with primers and notebooks on their laps. René opens class by having people talk about one of the drawings in their primer — one that shows people studying. He asks them why they want to learn.

One silver-haired grandmother smiles wistfully and says in a quiet voice, "My children live far away and I want to learn to write so that I can tell them my secrets." A young woman stands proudly and answers, "I want to get a good job someday." A thin wiry man raises his hand and says firmly, "I come to the center because of what happened in the Duvalier regime If I learn to read and write, that kind of government will not be able to return." René encourages another person to speak. Hesitating a little, the man answers, "So that my wife and I — well, so that we will be able to take a step forward together in life." On the other side of the class, his wife grins broadly. Everyone in the center knows that she is responsible for his presence there. She spent long hours prodding him until he finally agreed to come. "After all" he said at the time, "if she's going to study, I have to study. Otherwise she'll know more than me." *(V.M.)*

Valerie Miller is Director of Human Rights Education at the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and has served as advisor to adult education and development programs throughout the world. She analyzed the Nicaraguan literacy campaign in ***Between Struggle and Hope***, and has written extensively on literacy programs in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Where There's A Will...

Finding a way to literacy for speakers of Pulaar in Senegal

by Sonja Fagerberg-Diallo

The round grass houses of Sammba Bah and his family were visible from several kilometers away. Few other landmarks appeared above the flat horizon of Jolof, a region in central Senegal. We had already lost our way several times that morning while trying to find the track to Mowul. There were three of us in the Landrover — myself, a man from Oxfam who specialized in West African pastoralists, and Yero Dooro Jallo, a well-known Senegalese author. When we pulled up to Sammba Bah's, Yero Dooro stuck his head out of the window and called *"Assalam aleykum!"*.

Sammba Bah walked slowly out to the car. But instead of giving us the expected reply — greetings, an offer of milk, an invitation to stay for the next meal, and finally, directions to Mowul —he asked Yero Dooro his name. He recognized the voice from the weekly Pulaar radio program on Fulbe history that Yero Dooro has broadcast over the past several years. His next question was even more unexpected, "Do you have any history books in Pulaar? Any poetry?"

I sat in the back of the Land Rover and looked out over the barren landscape. Here, Fulbe families live in grass houses grouped in semi-permanent "camp-sites" scattered a few kilometers apart. The Fulbe (also known as "Fulani", "Peul" or "Fula") speak the language Pulaar or Fulfuulde, which they share with many other groups across the Sahel. For those living in Sammba Bah's region, the nearest source of water is a deep bore-hole perhaps fifteen kilometers away. The nearest school is twenty-five kilometers away, as is the nearest dispensary. Here in Jolof, women still give birth alone or with the help of family. When the dry season sets in and the young men take the cattle away in search of pasture, the women, children and old people left in the camp sites often go hungry, not having the preferred complement of milk and milk-products to mix with the pounded millet they eat morning, noon and evening.

Out here, I hardly expected Sammba Bah's first request to be about books, especially history books in Pulaar. But my many years of work with the Association for the Renaissance of Pulaar in Senegal have taught me never to underestimate the determination of Pulaar speakers to become literate in their own language, whether that person is a university professor or a traditional herder.

The existence of the Association for the Renaissance of Pulaar (A.R.P.) is the strongest evidence for the motivation to read and write in Pulaar. A grassroots organization with a national board in Dakar and four dozen chapters through-

▲ Members of the A.R.P. at a recent World Education workshop. The A.R.P. and World Education have worked together for the past two years on new materials for literacy classes and new methods of training teachers.

out the country, the A.R.P. has no paid staff and functions solely on the voluntary efforts of its five thousand members. The organization is an interesting amalgam of urban intellectuals educated in French and Arabic and Pulaar speakers in rural areas who have never been to school.

The A.R.P. has always viewed literacy as the key to a wider understanding of the self, one's community, and the world. Sammba Bah's request reinforced what I had already been told many times: Pulaar speakers see literacy instruction as a way of integrating their distinct cultural identity with a wider world of insights and aspirations. The topics which Pulaar literacy teachers choose to teach, writers choose to pen, and readers to read have to do with their own culture, heritage and society. Sammba Bah wasn't interested in receiving information on pump repair and malarial prophylaxis. He wanted history, poetry, and grammar.

At a time when much of the discussion about literacy still revolves around its ability to help people meet their basic physical needs, the renaissance now occurring among the two million Pulaar speakers in Senegal can serve as a valuable reminder of the importance of those affective qualities that sustain the fundamental requirements of identity and community.

Cultural Literacy

The issue of community is especially vital to speakers of languages which extend across national boundaries. From Senegal in the west to Sudan in the east, the numbers of Pulaar speakers are estimated at thirteen million, so any renaissance occurring in Senegal has the potential to affect a much larger population.

The activities of the A.R.P. have included open-air concerts with Pulaar musicians, collections of oral traditions on tape, theatrical presentations, and radio programs. As early as the mid-sixties, the A.R.P. added basic literacy in Pulaar to its other activities in recognition of the importance of literacy to the continuing vitality of the language. To do this, the national board encouraged the formation of local literacy classes, which were all dependent on the local chapters for support and organization. The effectiveness of the local effort with only minimal outside support has been the most outstanding hallmark of the A.R.P.'s activities, as the entire initiative has been self-propelled by numerous students and volunteer teachers.

The success of the A.R.P. in raising its members' consciousness about literacy can be traced to both external pressure from other language groups and a long history in the culture of Pulaar speakers that has given great importance to education and study.

The external pressures experienced by Pulaar speakers would be familiar to readers in almost any African nation. The linguistic environment of Senegal is complex. French serves as the official language of state while six African languages, including Pulaar, are recognized as "national languages". Among these, Wolof is spoken by the greatest number of people and has gained acceptance, especially in urban areas, as the lingua franca of Senegal.

In the years prior to independence, civil servants from many different areas of Senegal who had been educated in French institutions settled in St. Louis, Dakar and other administrative centers,

far from their place of birth. Many of those serving spoke Pulaar, but found there was little impetus to preserve their language due to the predominance of French and Wolof. The A.R.P. grew from the reaction of these civil servants to their new home and their desire to keep a language, and thus a culture, alive and able to embrace not only the epic poetry of their ancestors but the world of their children.

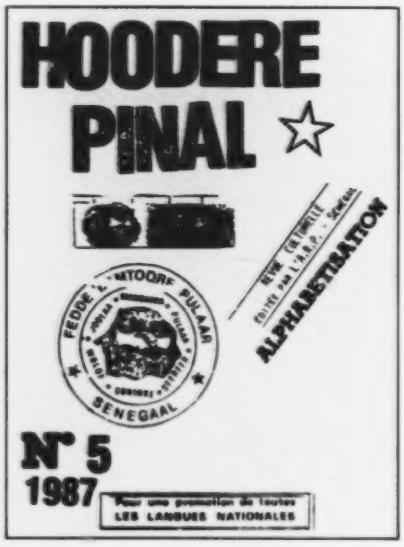
The members' embrace of the literacy program is not surprising, considering the historical importance of education among certain Pulaar speaking groups. Those living along the Senegal River Valley in a region traditionally known as Fuuta Tooro, have long placed great emphasis and value on studying, first in Arabic, and later in French. For instance, there was a clerical "class" of people literate in Arabic who brought about enormous political reform in the eighteenth century and who have ever since played a dominant role in the culture.

Pulaar speakers from the Senegal River Valley also played an important role outside of Senegal over the past twenty years. Many Senegalese who emigrated to France or Arabic-speaking countries to work and study came from this area. The high levels of literacy in their host countries inspired both uneducated migrant laborers and university students to become interested in reading and writing in their own language. Several student groups were founded to write simple texts in Pulaar for non-literate immigrant workers, and small journals proliferated, even if only two or three editions reached the printer.

Furthermore, Pulaar speakers from Senegal met others from countries such as Mali, Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Sudan. Through these encounters, they came to realize that they shared a pan-West African language and heritage, giving them further impetus to foster the writing of their language so that all could share materials. These groups also wrote home to encourage family and friends to try the same experience, and there has always been a fruitful relationship between the "militants" for Pulaar who work with the A.R.P. within Senegal, and those who work for Pulaar in other countries.

In contrast to those Pulaar speakers from the River Valley, Fulbe herders such as Sammba Bah have joined the movement more recently. Traditionally, pastoralists living in the Ferlo, a region just to the south of the Fuuta Tooro had long distained formal schooling in any form, being among the last to send any of their children to French schools. However, now that education is available in their own language, herders have been integral to the efforts of the A.R.P over the last six years.

Newsletter of the A.R.P. and poster for the 1986 National Literacy Week in Senegal.



A Commitment to Literacy

These disparate sources have shaped the A.R.P. of the eighties. It has become an important meeting ground between Pulaar speakers who have been educated in French, those who are educated in Arabic, and those who have not been to school at all, whether from the river valley, the Ferlo, or urban areas. Because they all share the same enthusiasm for literacy, each group has been able to present its ideas and concerns, and to discuss them together to help find common solutions.

The commitment to promoting literacy among Pulaar speakers was most evident to me at one of the teacher training classes I recently attended in Dakar. Professional teachers organize the classes for young people, many of whom have had only a few years of schooling in French. The trainees participate voluntarily in these evening classes where they solidify their own literacy skills, copy text from blackboards into their notebooks (their only teacher's manuals), and learn something about teaching methods. In addition, the teachers in these classes teach whatever their field happens to be — mathematics, geography, literature, history — but all in Pulaar. For the five hundred to one thousand students who have been through these classes, this serves as the first exposure to an education which is more than memorizing for tests. Their excitement at having access to information in their own language is palpable.

I visited a class recently with a representative from a private voluntary organization who did not speak Pulaar. I left her in one classroom to observe a discussion on orthography while I visited another class. Half an hour later, she appeared with a very puzzled expression, saying that someone had somehow taken over the classroom to, she surmised, "recite poetry". She believed the teacher was reciting beautiful and moving poems, given his body language and the rapt attention of his students. When we returned to the room, I listened for a moment only to realize that we weren't in the midst of a poetry reading, but a grammar lesson. After class the visitor asked a participant who spoke some French why he had been so obviously fascinated by such a potentially boring topic. He looked at her in astonishment and said, "But it's so important to learn that there are rules and how to apply them! I always thought that our language was just what it was, with no reason behind it."

Pulaar speakers have simply taken things into their own hands, doing their own teaching and materials development. The nation-wide network of literacy classes fostered by the A.R.P. results directly from their ability to tap the deep roots of cultural identity and forge a new community that brings together both past and future within the wider society of Senegal. This consciousness-raising has created the foundations for a dynamic, self-perpetuating literacy program. In the experience of the A.R.P., the "function" of literacy is much closer to the heart than the hand.

Sonja Fagerberg-Diallo, is a linguist who has been working and doing research on Pulaar while living in Senegal since 1976. She has been a "volunteer" with the A.R.P. since 1982. Her most recent activities include setting up a desk-top publishing center in Pulaar.

The Community Classroom

An experimental primary school program in Bangladesh

by Nacha Mallon

When my husband and I moved to Bangladesh in 1983, I was not sure if I would be able to put my professional experience and training as a specialist in childhood education to use. After eight months of searching for an appropriate way to use my skills, I was introduced to the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), a Bangladeshi non-governmental organization (see box). My initial interview was with Mr. Fazle Hassan Abed, its founder and director. He told me that BRAC needed someone with just my background to assist them with a pilot project they were about to initiate. I volunteered with the proviso that I be treated like any full time staff person, and from that moment I began a most fulfilling two-year personal and professional experience.

When I joined BRAC, I immediately became involved with a team preparing a proposal for a pilot Nonformal Primary Education (NFPE) project that was to be funded by a foreign agency. The initial three-year effort was to develop and test a low-cost alternative model to primary education, one which would include a curriculum that would be appropriate to rural culture and needs, a learning environment that did not alienate rural children, and a schedule capable of adaptation to different local community situations.

With respect to the schedule, BRAC was particularly concerned that the time spent in school daily would not significantly interfere with the important roles poor rural children play in income-generating and income-substitution activities. Therefore, the proposed program was to reduce not only the number of years of schooling, but also the hours spent daily in the classroom. In addition, since a lack of readiness for schooling on the part of children was viewed as a critical cause of the high dropout rate, a preschool component was included on a limited basis. The intention was to study the impact of this program on retention rates at the primary level. Finally, the program called for the organization of community groups to help plan and run the proposed centers or schools in hopes that these would contribute to higher retention rates.

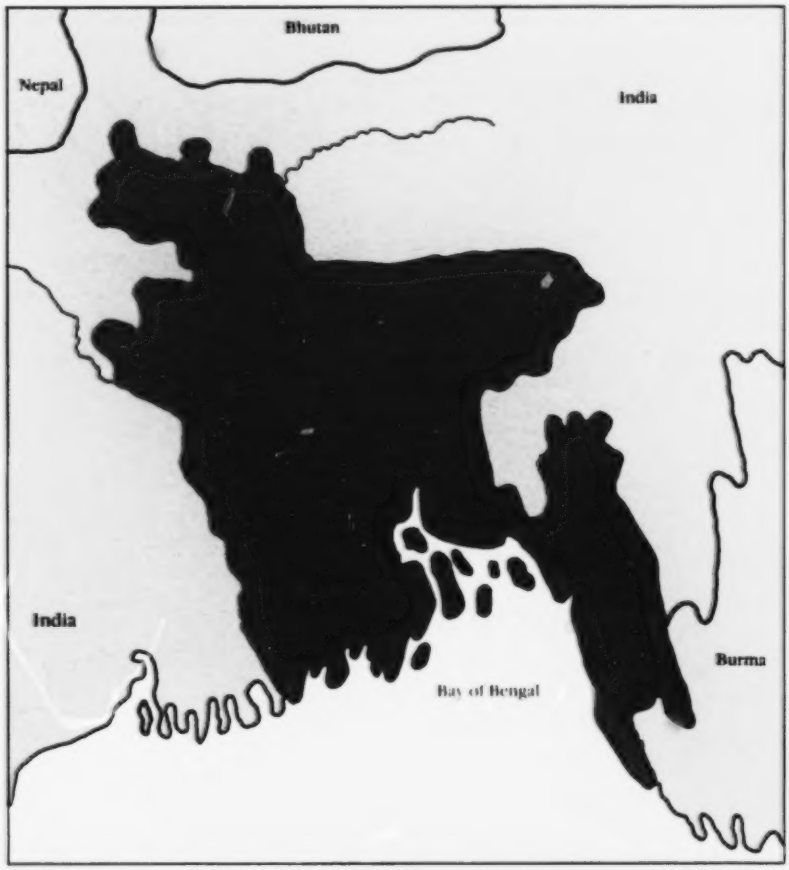
BRAC was primarily concerned with providing services in the localities where it was already working. But, given the fact that the national education system was reaching less than half the children of primary school age and that more than forty percent of those enrolled dropped out before completing two years, a broader goal was also spec-

ified. That is, BRAC sought to demonstrate to the educational authorities that the alternative nonformal model was worthy of government adoption at least until national resources permitted the expansion of full primary education services throughout the country.

Target Population

The population to receive the services was identified precisely within the social strata targeted by BRAC: children of the landless (eight to ten years old) who had never enrolled in primary school either for reasons of poverty or the unavailability of nearby schooling or who had dropped out because of inappropriate curricula or unrealistic social demands. The preschool program was originally opened to children aged 5½ to 6, but subsequently changed to 6½ to 7 so that it would lead immediately to the primary level program at age eight.

Concerned that the education offered achieve basic quality standards, the project limited classroom size to thirty pupils per teacher as opposed to the seventy-to-one ratio frequently found in government schools. Since community enthusiasm for the program was so great, registration was often a heart-breaking experience. When I registered preschool entrants, we were looking for children between 6½ and 7 years old. So eager were parents to have their children attend that they often brought tiny tots who could barely hop on one foot. "He is just very small for his age," the mother would insist, "but he is all of 6½ years." Weeding out those too young was a difficult and arbitrary process because birth certificates are, for all intents and purposes, non-existant in much of rural Bangladesh. To help overcome knawing doubts — some village children are so undernourished — I consulted a dentist friend to determine how we might use the presence of permanent teeth as a guide to a child's age. A series of guidelines were subsequently developed and used to reduce the arbitrariness of our selection.



Bangladesh is the most densely populated agrarian country in the world with ninety percent of its estimated forty-five million people living in seventy thousand villages. It is also among the poorest with more than eighty percent of its population living below the poverty level. Three-quarters of its population is illiterate.

Curriculum, Texts, and Methods

The primary level program developed involves a three-year curriculum that includes literacy, numeracy, basic science, social studies, health and hygiene. The centers are opened for 2½ hours a day, 280 days a year. Forty minutes each day are devoted to "co-curricular" activities such as physical exercise, singing, arts and crafts, and storytelling.

Textbooks and materials were initially prepared by specialists with input from experienced BRAC field staff and printed by BRAC's press. The textbooks cover four fields: reading, numeracy, science and social studies. Teachers are provided with "notes" reviewing specific instructional techniques, a manual providing pedagogical theory, and classroom aids such as charts, cards, and counting sticks.

The activities and tasks included in the textbooks follow methods and presentations inspired by the latest techniques. For instance, reading follows the "whole-language approach" a method that looks at whole units of meaning (words or phrases) and then switches to the "syllabic method", which is very appropriate for a language as phonetic as Bangla. The beginning math book is highly visual and helps develop the object-symbol connection.

BRAC produces the textbooks maintaining a keen eye on cost, because the project must be able to provide them free. It was important that the children be able to keep the books, as in most cases, they would be the very first to enter their households. I will never forget the day we gave a class of new students their first text. My most poignant memory is the sounds of the children joyously and softly commenting to each other as they turned the pages of their simple primer. "Look, a ball!" "Just like my house!" "Oh! nice mango." "My father's cow!" Punctuated by sudden gasps and muffled giggles, these comments reflected the satisfaction of discovery and recognition, the wonderful realization that they could understand their new friend, the book.

At the preschool level two programs exist. The first involves a six month accelerated curriculum of sixty-five lessons with a strong focus on literacy. The second is an extended curriculum of one hundred lessons. These curricula are supported with detailed lesson plans to instruct the teachers in the presentation of concepts and activities. The lesson plans are comple-

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)

BRAC has been involved in rural development activities since February 1972, shortly after Bangladesh achieved independence. It has chosen to work with the forty-five percent of the rural population that is landless or near landless, i.e., people who have no productive assets and must sell their manual labor to survive. BRAC's premise is that these poor can only gain the leverage necessary for improving their social and economic status, for achieving self-reliance, and, ultimately, for ending the exploitive relationships that have long dominated rural life in Bangladesh by organizing into groups and developing their ability to mobilize, manage, and control local and external resources. It views itself as a learning organization and develops programs through an ongoing dialogue with the people with whom it works.

As a consequence, BRAC's activities are wide-ranging and integrated. For example, with respect to income generation BRAC has helped almost 200,000 men and women form cooperative groups which plan, initiate, manage, and control activities ranging from fish-farming, animal husbandry, and poultry production to a variety of cottage industries and small-scale off-farm businesses. The Committee supports these efforts by providing training, extension credit, and logistical assistance. It also promotes programs in health and nutrition (e.g., village health care and family planning services, oral rehydration extension, etc.), education (adult functional education/literacy, leadership and skill training, village library/growth centers), as well as a range of other human resource development areas. In 1984, BRAC reached a population of about 2.25 million living in over 1,700 villages and had a total of 2,250 staff members.

In addition, BRAC provides services that directly support its field activities and those of other development organizations. Its Development Communications Unit designs, tests, and produces materials for its own education and training programs, for neo-literates, and for the development profession. The Training and Resource Center with its two regional facilities offers a variety of leadership development and occupational skill courses that last from four days to two months. These are attended by landless villagers, staff from BRAC and other Bangladeshi and Asian NGOs, and government civil servants. Its "Aarong" retail outlets provide extension services and marketing facilities to BRAC-assisted rural handicraft and other production groups. Finally, to reduce its dependence on donor funding BRAC has established two commercial enterprises, a printing house and a cold storage and ice plant, which earn substantial income for financing BRAC activities.

(Lou Setti)

mented with exercise pages and activities which cover forms, colors, numbers and families of numbers. There are also bingo games for number recognition and games for the development of memory and attention span.

Project Staff and Their Training

For Bangladesh to staff a nationwide public school system with professionally trained teachers is at this time a very remote hope. Consequently, BRAC's NFPE utilizes paraprofessionals. In choosing these individuals the preference has been for residents of the village (or one nearby) who are mothers or heads of households. All applicants are required to have completed at least nine years of formal schooling and undergo a careful screening to insure that they are proficient in basic skills, particularly reading with understanding. There has not been a lack of candidates as these part-time jobs provide not only added income but also a position of status within the village. Successful applicants undergo an intensive three week training program at one of BRAC's training centers. They also attend one day refresher sessions each month throughout the year where they work in groups to improve their teaching techniques and engage in a wide range of problem-solving activities.

Joining the paraprofessional teachers in many of both the pre- and in-service sessions are the Project Organizers (POs), BRAC's field level NFPE project staff. The POs are the key to the project's three-tiered support system. Hired to work exclusively on the NFPE project, these university graduates participate in both the training of the paraprofessional teachers and a program related specifically to their project functions. They also attend BRAC's regular "training of trainers" program. The POs live in the field and visit each of the fifteen to twenty centers in their area of responsibility at least once every two weeks, following a fixed schedule established in consultation with the teachers. During these visits they provide the teachers with advice and reassurance and, as needed, supplies. They also are responsible for gathering the project's feedback and evaluation data.

The POs are supported, in turn, by supervisors who operate out of project headquarters as well as curriculum and teacher training specialists. While the specialists are mostly part-time personnel drawn from universities, the supervisors are full-time BRAC staff and, increasingly, include individuals with PO experience.

Community Participation

As is the case in BRAC activities in general, the successes of the NFPE centers to date can be attributed in great part to the villagers themselves. Their input has been secured through village committees organized to support each center. These committees have five members: a community leader, two parents, the teacher, and the local PO. Their functions are to mobilize villagers and village resources for the construction, renovation, and maintenance of the centers; participate in approving the teachers and determining the center schedule; and take steps to insure regular attendance and continued parental interest and involvement.

For the most part, committee membership consists of individuals drawn from the village who have been involved in other BRAC activities. As a result, they are comfortable with the idea of asserting their influence on the program and skilled in doing so. During the first year of the project's operations, for example, the NFPE had planned to close the centers during harvest to allow the children to work with their parents. The committees decided that a better arrangement would be to keep the centers open, but adjust the daily program so it would not conflict with the work schedule of the village. Some centers, therefore, held classes in the early morning, others in the late afternoon, each according to parent preferences.

The committees also play a major role in solving the usual problems that arise in the course of program operations. They would, for example, deal with matters of irregular student attendance or, on occasion, the performance of a particular teacher. Some of the situations they have handled, however, are not so usual. During the monsoon of 1985 a group of children in one village became isolated from their center because a canal which separated their homes from the school overflowed its banks. In order that these children not miss class, the local committee arranged for their parents to take them at a predetermined time to their side of the canal and have them wade across together to the teacher and other parents waiting on the other side.

A second mechanism facilitating community participation is monthly meetings for parents and guardians. At these sessions the teacher and occasionally other members of the village committee discuss the attendance and progress of pupils and suggest ways to resolve persistent problems.

Current Status

In the course of the project's early years it became clear that the demand of poor villagers for primary schooling for their children was not limited to select communities where BRAC had long been active. The original NFPE proposal contemplated opening a total of forty primary school centers and five preschools during the project period. But, demand from poor communities was so great that by 1988, 730 centers enrolling 21,903 pupils (more than sixty percent female) and employing 678 teachers were in operation. Included in this number were 145 centers offering an eighteen-month program based on a similar nonformal model for 4,350 children aged eleven to fourteen.

To date the program has achieved several clear successes. First, a dropout rate of less than two percent indicates that perhaps many of the planners' original assumptions were valid and that the community has found the program to be appropriate to their needs. Moreover, over ninety percent of the first batch of graduates of the three-year program gained admittance to the fourth grade in government primary schools. Though the per pupil cost in the BRAC centers is higher than that in the government schools (US$16 to US$7), the nonformal model is cost effective if the sixty percent wastage (dropouts and repetition) in the formal school system are factored in. Community pressures and an in-depth program review completed in 1988 have encouraged BRAC to undertake a major three-year expansion effort.

Second, with sixty percent of its enrollment female, the program has had unusual success in retaining girls. Despite this success, however, the NFPE continues to be concerned with the lack of opportunities such children have, given that in practice few girls of poor families are effectively served by the government schools. Consequently, BRAC has established an enrollment target of seventy percent for girls in the NFPE program.

Third, many of the curriculum materials and guides produced by the project have been in demand by other groups providing primary education services in the country. And, finally, efforts to coordinate with the government authorities have also had some tangible results. Most notably, ten new preschools have been opened by BRAC in villages that have a government primary school and an agreement has been reached to feed BRAC preschool graduates into these government schools and to conduct a follow up study on their achievement and attendance records.

The success of the BRAC experiment is obvious but it may be useful to consider how this emerging model may work in other countries. Each country is of course unique in some respects, but many educational needs are common to both developing and developed countries. The use of paraprofessionals, the development of a needs-oriented curriculum with diversified offerings appropriate to different socio-cultural situations, the establishment of parents groups with meaningful roles and authority, and adaptable school schedules following not only time but seasons are all concepts that merit consideration. A monolithic, unified educational system misses the needs of many children, especially the children of the poor.

Ms. Nacha Mallon worked on the NFPE project for BRAC from late 1985 to early 1986 and returned later in 1986 for a five-week period. The author and editors wish to express gratitude to the NFPE's program director, **Mrs. Kaniz Fatema Muhhuidin,** for providing updated information on the project.

Dreams Come True

Building a statewide literacy system for the year 2000

by Sondra Gayle Stein

It was an unusual way to begin a new literacy campaign. There was no press conference announcing a ground-breaking plan. There was, in fact, no plan developed behind closed doors to reveal. Instead, the first official notice of the Massachusetts Governor's new Commonwealth Literacy Campaign (CLC) was an invitation to over one hundred representatives of the state's literacy community to help frame a plan for developing a new state agency for literacy over the next three years. Through a day-long "Mission-to-Action Working Conference," business leaders listened to adult learners and both exchanged ideas with staff from adult education programs. University faculty who had conducted research on literacy talked shop with officials from local unions. In the end the consensus was remarkably clear. The CLC should use its authority as Governor Michael Dukakis' voice on literacy to catalyze changes at the state level that enable community-based practitioners to do their jobs better.

This was a very different mission than that initially proposed by the Governor. When he asked Gerry D'Amico, a well-liked former state senator, to head up his new initiative "to bring down the barrier of adult illiteracy," the Governor had in mind the creation of a Citizen Volunteer Corps and the coordination of several already existing state-level programs. To literacy providers and advocates the appointment of such a prominent political figure as D'Amico

Regional master trainer Cristine Smith, above right, works with volunteer tutors from a local literacy center. The Commonwealth Literacy Campaign uses volunteer tutors to help strengthen community-based programs.

was a clear sign that the Governor took this initiative seriously. However, like advocates in other states, they felt they had waited too long for state-level leadership to accept a "Volunteer Corps" as a serious answer to an extremely complex problem.

The State of the System

Only twenty-five years old, Massachusetts' system of public adult basic education had never received serious financial or political support. It was fragmented and impoverished. Despite increases in state funding won over the preceding three years by the steady pressure of a growing literacy lobby, federal, state, and local sources combined to provide an annual outlay sufficient to reach only three to five percent of the adults in need. Moreover, spending per adult student averaged only two hundred dollars per year, while primary and secondary school students received approximately twenty times as much. This lack of resources meant whole regions of the state and whole groups within the population lacked access to the adult basic education services that could enable them to take more control over their lives.

There was hope for something different. Earlier in the year the State Board of Education had adopted a new policy that committed the Department of Education to work with the Governor, the Legislature, and other state agencies to develop "a comprehensive system for the delivery of adult basic education services that will ensure opportunities for universal adult literacy". In 1987, however, when the CLC got underway, adult literacy in Massachusetts was far from that system and far from the level of funding and commitment from state agencies, the legislature, and the Governor that would enable such a system to be put in place.

This was the challenge the participants in our "Mission to Action" conference wanted us to take on. They wanted us to educate decision-makers in both the public and private sectors about the critical importance of a literate adult population to the health and well-being of the state. They wanted us to raise money for more teachers and for better classroom space so services could be increased to meet the expanding need. They wanted new program models for reaching out to adults who weren't getting adequately served, such as those who were barely literate or those with learning disabilities. And they wanted good field-based research to guide the development of these models and

Commonwealth Literacy Campaign Director Gerry D'Amico, left, presents Michael Dukakis, the Governor of Massachusetts, with a tee-shirt at the kickoff of the CLC's volunteer component in March 1988.

expanded training and staff development opportunities to create a professional workforce. In short, they wanted the foundations for a real system so that adults could have a second chance education that would truly be first rate.

While a state senator, D'Amico had shepherded the state's first major public school reform bill through the legislature. The challenge for reforming adult literacy programming was even greater because the basic organizational infrastructure was weak. The only assets were scattered pockets of extraordinarily dedicated professionals. Would it be possible for the CLC to catalyze the necessary changes? Could adult basic education emerge as a fully-articulated system in the state's educational pantheon? Tiny as the Campaign staff was, we decided to try. Our success, we said, would be measured not by the publicity we generated in the short run, but by the systemic changes institutionalized ten years after we began.

The Need for Adult Literacy

Massachusetts has a reputation as the home of our nation's finest private institutions of higher education. We've earned a reputation as a hothouse for a number of high-tech entrepreneurs. As a result, many citizens, including the policy-makers who determine funding levels, have assumed that the adult population as a whole is extremely well-educated.

Compared to many nations, Massachusetts adults *are* well-educated. We have achieved near universal literacy. Ninety-eight percent of our adult population has completed at least four years of formal education and ninety-five to ninety-nine percent are able to engage in simple literacy tasks—to encode and decode words. However, the picture is not as bright as it seems.

Massachusetts has had a problem for the past fifteen years similar to that being confronted in other parts of the United States and in other nations including such newly-industrialized countries as Malaysia, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, and South Korea. In Massachusetts, as well as these other nations, the expectations of what it means to be literate have shifted as the predominant technologies in society have changed. Possession of basic literacy skills is clearly no longer sufficient for adults to meet the demands placed on them by society. While many of our adults can read and write, they cannot read well enough to solve the daily problems they confront or to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. This is the definition of functional literacy proposed by literacy experts David Harman and Carman St. John Hunter; and if we use it, then we are forced to adopt post-secondary school competency as a standard for literacy in contemporary North American society.

The need for such a high standard is clear when we look at changes in the Massachusetts economy over the past fifteen years. During that period the job share for those without a high school diploma has declined from thirty-four percent to fifteen percent of all jobs. Two general trends account for this decline. The first is the loss of manufacturing jobs in textile, apparel, food, and metals manufacture. As a result of plant closings and changes in the organization

of production in these industries, jobs that were traditionally apprenticed —passed on from father to son with no need for a high school diploma — have been lost or redefined.

Second, workers are increasingly expected to be autonomous problem-solvers, working in teams that perform a variety of functions in the production process. In addition, the introduction of computerized equipment to ensure quality control means that workers can no longer rely on 'hand/eye' measurement, but must be able to read and interpret complex charts and forms.

The transformation of the manufacturing sector has been complemented by rapid growth in the service sector; particularly in services related to business and finance, computer operation and data processing, and health care. If this growth continues, three-quarters of all jobs in Massachusetts will be in the service sector by the year 2000. In most cases these service jobs will require substantially stronger reading, writing, computation, communication, and problem-solving skills than the jobs they replace. Current projections are that the median educational level required by the new jobs will be 13.5 years of schooling, not just for Massachusetts but for the nation as a whole.

Measured according to this standard, our state faces a substantial educational problem. The 1980 Census revealed that nearly thirty percent of the population over sixteen years old and out of school lacked a high school diploma. A statewide dropout rate of twenty percent from our public schools (much higher in urban neighborhoods) swells this number every year. And, while the majority of the more than two hundred thousand refugees and immigrants who have settled in Massachusetts in the last decade have been educated in their native country, one quarter of those have less than five years of formal schooling, compared with three percent of US native borns. Add to these groups the adults who have completed high school some time within the past thirty years whose skills are no longer appropriate to the changing demands of the workplace. Overall, we arrive at figures that would make even the most complacent policy-maker worried; as many as two million adults, nearly half of our adult population, are in need of stronger literacy skills and opportunities for further education.

Creating a Workforce Literacy Plan

Governor Dukakis called for an adult literacy initiative as awareness of this need for improved literacy services was growing among many groups. Employers were unable to find enough skilled workers in a near full employment economy. Training coordinators in state programs for the unemployed were forced to reject applicants because they lacked adequate basic skills. Welfare caseworkers found themselves unable to help women on welfare develop the skills they needed to achieve family self-sufficiency. But the overwhelming challenge was the enormity of the system-building task, which truly demanded the kind of leadership a governor's initiative could provide. Only by being placed in the Governor's office could the CLC secure the autonomy and authority necessary to coordinate the six state agencies overseeing more than fourteen different funding programs and to win an increased commitment of funds from the legislature. It also required a leader like D'Amico, well-known in state government and able both to understand the language of educators and mediate between the many different players.

World Education and U. Mass./Amherst coordinate the CLC's training of Adult Basic Education volunteers.

With the goal of bringing together the elements of a system, the Commonwealth Literacy Campaign began the formidable task of building a constituency committed to a common literacy agenda from both the government and the community of literacy advocates. Two early conferences were key to this effort. The first, the statewide "Mission-to-Action Working Conference" mentioned at the beginning of this article, invested the broader literacy community in working with us to achieve goals which were directly responsive to the needs they had identified. The second, a week-long working conference sponsored by the National Governor's Association, brought representatives of the major state agencies providing literacy services together to weld a common vision of a comprehensive literacy system.

Developing a Comprehensive Plan

Guided by nationally recognized experts on literacy and public policy, our team of "insiders" worked side-by-side with teams from ten other states at a turn-of-the-century resort in Missouri. Our task was to hammer out a coherent policy framework and a clear set of achievable goals for addressing the long-term literacy needs of our state.

During that week we began to lay the foundation for what we later called "The Massachusetts Workforce Literacy Plan". Senior staff from state and city education, training, welfare and labor agencies put aside questions of turf and private ownership to join together with those of us from the CLC and representatives from the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Literacy, an advocacy group that includes literacy providers.

Since the number of adults who might seek literacy services was potentially enormous, our first task was to agree on a limited number of groups within the Massachusetts population who were most in need. These groups, which were among those then targeted for service by our agencies, included: refugees and immigrants with insufficient English language and literacy skills; women on welfare with low literacy skills; young urban males who were school dropouts unable to find work; mothers of young children whose literacy skills put their children's educational development at risk; the working poor; and dislocated and potentially dislocated workers. Once we had identified these groups, we looked more closely at each one to discover what we knew about that group's needs, and began to outline the parameters of a system that was capable of meeting the needs we had identified.

The result was a process and a plan that represented a significant breakthrough in adult literacy planning and policy development. Over the years we had seen numerous job training and employment plans that recognized literacy as a "prevocational" need, but these always seemed to subordinate individual educational needs to a common end goal. As a result, they produced a systemic "skimming off the cream" that bypassed those most in need. This time, education, not training, was the starting point. We identified the unique educational needs of key groups who would

be the mainstay of our workforce over the next decade and proposed that the state literacy system expand its operations to reach one hundred thousand adult learners per year, up from the forty-five thousand currently served. The goal of these services would be to provide members of these groups the opportunity over time to develop the basic educational skills they needed to qualify for more advanced education and training and for employment in a changing labor market. Although increasing employability was an explicit ultimate goal of the plan we proposed, our emphasis rested on what each of the target groups needed in order to get there. It was clear, for example, that the kind of services that would work best for unemployed women on welfare with basic education needs would be very different from the services that would be most appropriate for immigrants who needed stronger English language and literacy skills to get better jobs or dislocated workers who needed stronger reading and math to respond to changes in traditional manufacturing jobs.

Along with setting goals for who gets served, the Workforce Literacy Plan set parameters for how they would get served, calling for comprehensive services (including support services such as child care) in the context of adults' daily lives within their natural communities. The plan also assumed a substantially higher annual cost per client to allow for such critical systems-building features as the support of full-time, well-trained teachers; the development of a strong documentation and evaluation capacity; the provision of high intensity, long duration basic literacy services; and the creation of a full continuum of services that would take an adult from the lowest level of literacy or English language proficiency through high school completion and advanced education and training.

The Dream of a New System

All of the particulars of the plan were not, of course, fully developed during the five days in Missouri. The fit between this Workforce Literacy Plan and the needs identified by providers at our "Mission-to-Action" conference has been evolving through many meetings over the course of many months. The process is ongoing.

Literacy practitioners continue to be an active part of the process. Through the public policy subcommittee of the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Literacy and in task forces organized by the Department of Education, these practitioners are investigating such critical issues to our system-building efforts as alternatives for stabilizing literacy program funding, program standards and criteria for each target group in our Workforce Literacy Plan, and statewide staff development and teacher certification plans.

Faculty and professional staff from public institutions of higher education have also been invited to come together to define a role for themselves and for the Board of Regents as a whole in strengthening the adult literacy system. One of the principal outcomes has been a dialogue about the need to recognize adult basic education as a legitimate field in schools of education.

We are also drawing on what we can learn from model programs like the interagency Workplace Education Initiative and the Commonwealth Literacy Campaign's Volunteer Corps. Through the Volunteer Corps new models are being tested for incorporating volunteers into existing services in such a way that they enhance the capacity of each program to deliver services. This approach seems to be breaking down the opposition between volunteers and paid professionals and opening up a path for volunteers to choose to continue to develop their skills and knowledge and become full-time literacy professionals. Just as important, the decentralized model we have developed to deliver our training seems to be awakening the creativity of those participating at every level, from the exemplary practitioners who have become our pool of Regional Master Trainers to the program-based Volunteer Coordinators, staff, and volunteers who participate in pre-service and in-service training.

While the Volunteer Corps provides a mechanism for testing out some new approaches to staff recruitment and development, the Workplace Education Initiative has taught us about building local public-private partnerships. Through the exemplary efforts of this program, employers and unions across the state are learning more and more about the value of offering basic education programs to employees at the workplace. A joint project of the CLC, the Executive Office of Labor, the Department of Education, and the Department of Employment and Training, the Initiative directly funds only fifteen programs operating in twenty-five worksites. However, it has stimulated the development of dozens more and plans to reach out over the next year to more employers and unions by focusing its research and technical assistance on the educational needs of workers in several key sectors of the Massachusetts economy, including traditional and high tech manufacturing, health and hospitals, and other developing service industries. The CLC is supporting this outreach effort through spearheading special initiatives with state leaders from both the labor unions and the business community.

Meanwhile, the Interagency Literacy Group, the group of "insiders" who met together for the first time in Missouri and is now the Campaign's principal task force, continues the hard work of developing an implementation schedule for the Workforce Literacy Plan that will result in a better coordinated, more streamlined literacy system at both the state and local levels. The group has now been expanded to include all the state agencies that provide literacy services or that represent adults in need of literacy services. Most important, it has become institutionalized through a formal link to the Massachusetts Jobs Council, the official policy-making body for education and training in the state.

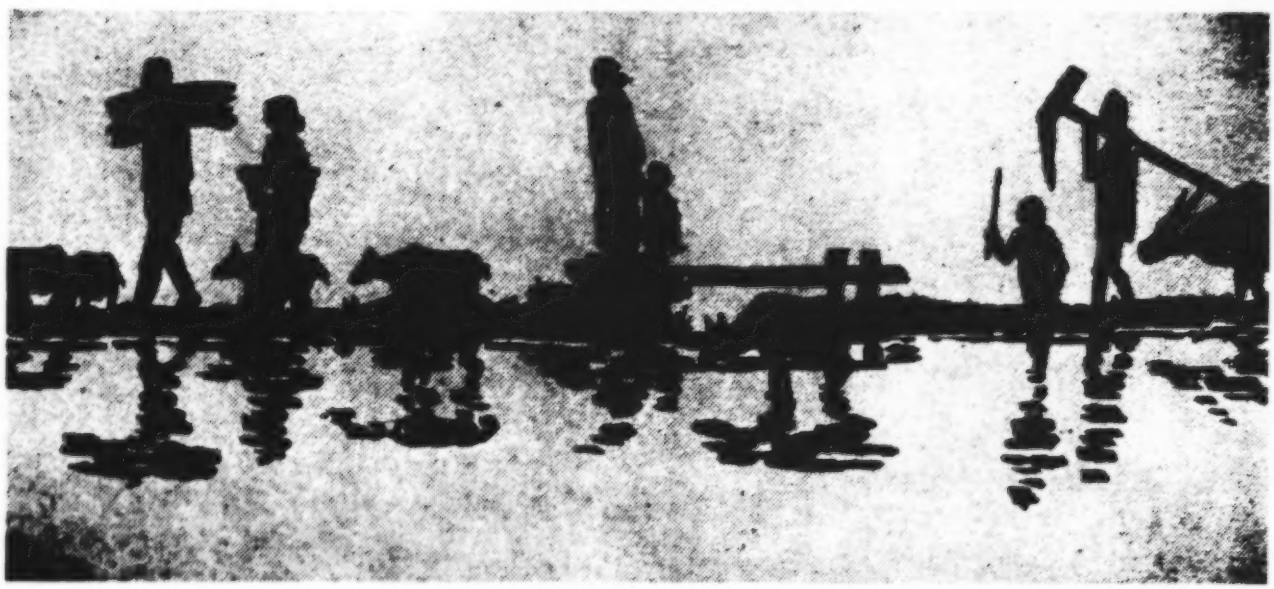
Our final arena is legislation. "An Act to Strengthen Workforce Literacy" has passed the state's House of Representatives and now awaits passage in the Senate. If approved, it will represent the first adult literacy legislation in Massachusetts and will provide a statutory basis for the enhanced and expanded system that we are in the process of building.

More and more frequently we are seeing signs that this dream of a new system may become part of a common reality. After so much talking among ourselves and with businesspeople and shop stewards, legislators and newspaper reporters, college presidents and prospective volunteers, we have begun to evolve a common vocabulary and a common syntax. We are learning how to talk with each other, how to structure a system that is strong enough and flexible enough to meet all our needs.

It is too soon to evaluate the success of the Commonwealth Literacy Campaign as a catalyst for institutional change. The beginning signs of change we have documented above reflect long hours of work on the part of numerous individuals and organizations that have come to share a common vision of a new system. Five years from now, if we have been successful, that vision won't merely be in our minds or in one more position paper. It will be in the heads and hands of thousands of adults for whom literacy is one step toward making their own dreams come true.

Sondra Gayle Stein has been working in the field of adult basic education for fifteen years. For the past five years, she has worked at the state level to develop policies and programs critical to building a real public adult basic education system. She is currently Deputy Director for Policy and Program Development of the Commonwealth Literacy Campaign.

The Service Center Approach



The importance of regional literacy centers

by James Hoxeng

At the Ministry of Health in Lesotho, community health workers were trying to get an ORT-awareness campaign underway. Down the street, the staff of the Lesotho Co-operative Credit Union League was concerned about the problems clients had in understanding how credit unions operated. Even though the health workers' needs differed from those of the Credit Union League, both groups turned for help to a center for nonformal education in Maseru, the Nonformal Education Service Agency, a division of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre.

The Service Agency offers guidance in materials development, training methods, mass communication techniques and evaluation to a variety of organizations involved in rural education and development. For the ORT-awareness campaign, the Service Agency helped develop and improve training materials in preventive health measures, as well as train community health workers in mass communication techniques. The Agency recommended a more direct approach to reach the Credit Union League's clients. It helped write and produce a series of short radio programs which explained to people exactly what the Credit Union League was and what factors went into making decisions about extending credit.

The Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre is one example of a nascent approach for reaching the large numbers of rural adults who make up the bulk of the world's one billion illiterates. Conventional wisdom has it that the most effective way of achieving universal adult literacy is by establishing an autonomous state-sponsored, national literacy organization that draws on and coordinates resources from all major sectors to design and deliver classes for adult learners. However, these examples from Lesotho and similar programs in other countries offer an alternative. Working within existing structures, these service centers help development programs incorporate literacy into their ongoing activities. This collaborative approach is beginning to achieve the kind of success that is necessary if we are even to think about eradicating illiteracy.

The conventional approach of establishing a centralized, autonomous organization to coordinate literacy activities in all sectors has not been success-

ful because literacy has only occasionally received the kind of support — political as well as financial —that makes intersectoral coordination possible, much less effective. Both donor agencies and recipient governments are reluctant to put adequate resources into adult literacy programs. Their record of achievement over the past forty years has been disheartening, dating from early efforts in "fundamental education" after World War II all the way through to the current emphasis on basic education.

Whenever literacy programs are developed as freestanding entities with the teaching of literacy and numeracy as their primary objective, the burden is on the program's designers to make the links with food, health, work, and whatever else is deemed part of people's fundamental requirements. An early and difficult problem in forging such links is to make the benefits of literacy clear to Ministry officials, employers, health practitioners, and others whose agencies take primary responsibility for those requirements. Their normal reaction is that involvement in a literacy program will cost them time and money with no connection to their work nor a clear promise of return.

Such skepticism is justified, as planners' efforts to link literacy with fundamental requirements have often been clumsy and ineffective. For example, Unesco's Experimental World Literacy Program tried to link literacy with teaching shoemaking and tailoring so that participants would emerge from the program with marketable skills. However, program planners discovered that if all the people who enrolled completed the program successfully, they would not be able to use their new skills, as there was too little work for the new graduates to share with those already working. Connections between literacy skills and other areas not related to work such as improved nutrition and health practices, usually require the cooperation of extensionists or other professionals, taking time away from their regular duties to spend in literacy classes.

To complicate matters further, public agencies perceive an intersectoral effort as encroaching on their turf, competing for the same resources and possibly vying for control of those resources. Control over budgets is never easily surrendered, and that, in effect, is what is called for if a literacy program is charged with the coordination of other sectors. "Coordinate" is a transitive verb, and no one wants to be its object. Other sectors are already mobilized, they have bureaucracies, middle management and field staff, all of whom are more or less working to achieve the organization's aims. Their stated goals rarely, if ever, include improving literacy and numeracy skills. Their training programs take little or no note of what levels of literacy and numeracy participants bring to the session.

The problem becomes more complex if literacy program planners try to include not only public agencies but private organizations as well. Trade unions or private voluntary organizations are understandably wary of any initiative that requires full disclosure of their current and planned programs and budgets. They are even less enthusiastic when a literacy planner arrives to tell them how their money should be spent.

Some argue that this kind of overall coordination is still possible given a sufficient level (and the sufficient leverage) of political will. The state is seen as the only entity capable of developing and endorsing both a nation-wide organization and the momentum needed to mobilize people for literacy. However, popular mobilization has proven successful only when the state has been able to support its programs over a sustained period of time. Countries with democratically elected governments experience changes in administration, and as happened recently in Honduras, the national literacy program may be so closely identified with one administration that the incoming party is virtually obliged to disavow and disassemble it. On the other hand, countries with long-standing governments that do not depend on winning elections to assure their continuance are often not keenly interested in having their poor populations become literate, numerate, or even vocal. An inventory of national-level literacy programs in such countries would not make a very long list.

The experience of the past three decades leads to the conclusion that "classic" intersectoral coordination is a non-starter. Some other means are needed for literacy to attain a higher priority. Otherwise, today's total of nearly one billion illiterates will only grow.

Re-examining the Assumptions

Let's assume a different bottom line: Instead of eradicating illiteracy, we will think about improving the standard of living for all people handicapped by illiteracy. This takes us back for a minute to the question of literacy's definition. If we stop at the mere *ability* to read and write, we run the risk of seeing literacy as simply an exalted state of being that surpasses living without the ability to interpret symbols. For people on the economic fringe, however, literacy serves as a means of inquiry, and knowledge of letters the main avenue for learn-

Cartoons about social and economic change used for the Nepal national literacy program. World Education has worked with the Adult Education Section of the Ministry of Education in Nepal for the past 11 years on materials development and training.

ing things beyond one's personal experience. In fact, third world literacy programs have found that people's stated reasons for studying are almost always functional: to learn how to make money, to avoid being cheated, or to learn new health and nutrition practices.

If literacy is a means to a better life, why can't we weave literacy into programs that directly address people's "functional" concerns? Literacy professionals would do well to view the organizations that tackle fundamental problems as their *clients*, not their subjects (that is, subject to the coordination of the literacy program). The question then becomes how to encourage literacy professionals to see their task as helping make development programs as successful as possible — while improving the literacy skills of the trainees.

Education and training in the non-education ministries has received substantially more funding in the past ten to fifteen years. Policy makers recognize the need for field workers and extensionists to encourage the adoption and adaptation of technology in order to improve yields or heighten health and nutritional status. The effectiveness of this training has been widely questioned, however.

A 1984 study by Burton Swanson and V. Sigman found that African extension directors see the lack of good training for fieldworkers in extension methods as the most serious problem their organizations face. They say their formal training teaches extension students "to respect authority and not to question the validity of the subject matter presented," and they vainly expect farmers to do the same.

What do literacy professionals have to offer these sector-based programs? First, they have the skills to develop teaching materials that make use of participatory learning approaches. Even though these approaches have been developed and tested over the past ten or fifteen years, the pedagogical principles on which they are based are widely ignored in extension and training programs throughout the world.

When extensionists use adult education techniques, however, substantial literacy gains can occur, even though the subject of the materials is not the promotion of reading and writing. An evaluation conducted by researchers at UCLA found that significant changes in the literacy levels of largely illiterate Andean campesinos occurred within only a few weeks using a community-based simulation game. In Tunisia, following a business skills training program for small entrepreneurs with minimal literacy skills, a concomitant measurable improvement in both business skills and literacy was found, accompanied by an increased motivation on the part of the trainees for continuing to improve their literacy skills.

The second service literacy professionals have to offer is to train front-line workers in the effective use of the newly-developed materials. If the materials developed by the literacy professionals are based on participatory methods, they can begin to break the top-down, lecture-based methods imbued in most extensionists throughout their academic preparation. Experience shows that extensionists will continue to use participatory techniques and materials, once they see the positive reactions of their audiences to the new approach.

The service-oriented approach also offers new opportunities for effective evaluation. Client organizations need to know whether they are benefiting from the assistance of the literacy experts. Managers need to know whether their subordinates' training time is being put to good use, and the front-line workers need to be able to demonstrate to their organizational superiors that they are succeeding in transferring the information and technology to the target population. With all involved parties having a vested interest in learning what effect their labors are producing, there is a much better opportunity for evaluation to be taken seriously and its results used to improve the extension and training programs. At the same time, literacy professionals have evidence not only that their trainees are in possession of new reading and writing skills, but that they are putting them to use in ways that are directly connected with improving their lives. Currently available evaluation techniques make it possible to obtain solid data with short, easily scored instruments which can be administered by the extensionists as they begin and complete training activities.

An Emerging Approach

The staff of a service center typically consists of a number of different literacy professionals, including material developers, trainers, and research applications technicians. Small countries need just one national center; large countries may need regional or provincial centers. Service center staff in effect market the center's services to those in charge of community-level training in ministries, public institutions and private organizations. They draw up contracts specifying what the center will deliver, and what impact can be expected from its intervention.

For example, staff of a service center prototype in Ecuador produced materials on beekeeping in response to discussions with agricultural extension managers. They were able to pre-test the materials at the community level, and train a cadre of extensionists to use participatory training approaches. They then helped fieldworkers design and evaluate the use of the training in their communities. Finally, they assessed the improvement in literacy and numeracy skills associated with the training.

The service center approach differs from conventional wisdom in that the literacy professionals focus on service instead of coordination. That shift of focus allows or even requires them to concentrate on their areas of strength —materials and training — rather than on the large-scale organizational problems which have historically not been their forte. There is no extensive service center bureaucracy, since a service center is basically comprised of technicians working as colleagues. While state support is necessary for initiation and legitimacy of a service center effort, the level of support required is very small, relative to setting up a new literacy bureaucracy. Furthermore, since client organizations have often proved willing to pay for services there is good likelihood that in many countries a service center can move toward a self-supporting status as it gains in experience and reputation.

The service center approach, either in whole or in part, is already working in the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre, at the *Centro al Servicio de la Accion Popular* in Venezuela, in the Ministry of Education's Adult Education Section in Nepal, at the Ministry of Agriculture's Institute for Campesino Training in Ecuador, and in Papua New Guinea's Coffee Development Agency. The experiences with all of these centers make service agencies worth trying on a broader scale. By working with programs in such sectors as agriculture, health, cooperatives, nutrition, and forestry, the service centers tie literacy to efforts that put food on tables, help children survive, and promote sound conservation practices.

The service center approach has begun to bridge the divide between the reality of people's fundamental requirements and the rhetoric that has long called for a "functional" literacy. Service centers have shown that literacy and numeracy are vital to achieving tangible improvements to people's lives. Their results are impressive and measurable. Their example deserves our attention.

James Hoxeng is an international education specialist with the Agency for International Development. His major emphasis has been on developing and testing sustainable programs of nonformal education for development, including the Lesotho and Ecuador organizations mentioned in this article.

Reports On...

Young Literacy Professionals Institute

One student teacher came up with an idea — storefront reading centers for the homeless in Sydney and Brisbane, Australia. Another woman who had almost finished her student teaching made plans to ask her second graders to work with adults just learning to read, then invite the adult new readers to help the slower readers in her class. These were two of the dozens of innovative projects that students took home with them at the end of the Young Professionals Institute on Literacy held in Brisbane, Australia in the summer of last year.

At the invitation of the International Reading Association and Unesco, more than sixty young people gathered from ten countries to share ideas about literacy practice and problems around the world. "Young professionals" included graduate students and those just beginning their careers in education and the field of literacy. In addition to the young participants, a number of "old professionals" attended as well to speak about global and national issues related to literacy. Representatives from World Education and Rotary International gave participants a view of the literacy efforts of non-governmental organizations.

The most exciting part of the institute was the creative energy, enthusiasm, and dedication of the young people. The title of the Institute, "Global Issues, Promising Solutions" might be construed as a comment on the solutions promised, but not delivered, over the past forty years of attention focused on literacy as a means to a peaceful and just world. The Institute offered proof that the young professionals now entering the field are determined to find promising solutions of their own, not rest on unfulfilled promises of the past.

Key-note speeches and presentations were only the background for the development of individual action plans, which evolved in small group discussions throughout the week-long activities. By the end of the Institute, participants had shared their own experiences with each other, identified special concerns which they had about literacy work in their own countries, and discussed specific plans to involve people in their own communities in literacy activities.

The Young Professionals Institute was one among many efforts supported by the Unesco Secretariat and its Collective Consultation of Nongovernmental Organizations on Literacy. The activities are intended to promote greater understanding of the issues around literacy and illiteracy in both the developing world and industrialized countries through collaboration and cooperation between non-governmental organizations. In the past this has included regional training workshops, country level projects, jointly prepared publications, and international meetings and seminars.

The success of the Institute in reaching the Unesco goal of greater understanding could best be expressed in the words of the participants, as quoted in "Reading Today", the newspaper of the International Reading Association. Mary Klockeman from the United States realized for the first time that, "(I)lliteracy is not an isolated problem, but pervasive in both developed and underdeveloped countries around the world." And Ann Fehrenbach, also from the United States, seemed best to reflect the motivation of those attending when she said, "(The Institute) has encouraged me to act and given me a starting point for furthering my ideas. It's individuals who make a difference."

For further information on the Young Literacy Professionals Institute contact: Dr. Phyllis Adams, International Reading Association, 5455 Manitou Road, Littleton, Colorado, 80123.

(David Kahler)

From the Field

LETTER TO THE FIELD: A Message from the Director-General

As from today, 8 September 1988, only fifteen months remain before the start of International Literacy Year on 1 January 1990.

Ten years on from then we will reach the year 2000. What will be the state of education as the new millennium dawns? Will literacy be on the point of being vanquished or will adult illiterates still be numbered in hundreds of millions? Can we really look forward to that date when an estimated 890 million of our fellow human beings at present cannot even read or write? Will it be possible to talk of scientific literacy or of 'computer literacy' when basic literacy is still out of the reach of so many? Over one hundred million primary school-age children are not enrolled in school; hundreds of millions of young people are forced to abandon their education before attaining an enduring level of literacy. They will be the adult illiterates of the early twenty-first century unless urgent remedial steps are taken.

This is why International Literacy Year 1990 is absolutely decisive if the international community is to give renewed impetus to the drive to eradicate illiteracy before the end of this century. One of Unesco's most important tasks is to promote the fundamental human right to education for all without distinction of race, sex, language or religion. It must therefore be at the forefront of the United Nations system's efforts to rid the world of the scourge of illiteracy.

What could International Literacy Year achieve?

This will depend very much upon what the international community and, more particularly, governments and national communities around the world make of this occasion, hence my message to you today. International Literacy Year represents a unique opportunity to increase public awareness of the scope and danger of the problem of illiteracy, renew commitments, reinvigorate ongoing programmes and launch fresh initiatives for combating illiteracy. The creation of a literate world is a challenge which calls for urgent, wide-ranging action in all walks of society, for each and every one of us has a stake in the outcome of this struggle and can and must contribute to it.

Literacy work does not take place in isolation; it is part and parcel of the overall quest for development and the battle against poverty. Literacy can be a precious component in many forms of training and productive activities. Taught in conjunction with agricultural skills, health and nutritional information, or numerous other subjects, literacy enables learners individually to pursue their education in different fields and constantly to renew and extend their knowledge. It is such individual self-fulfillment that Unesco has a duty to promote.

In closing, I should like to address warm greetings from Unesco to the millions of men and women throughout the world who devote their lives to the promotion of education and literacy, thus contributing selflessly to the creation of a better world. International Literacy Day is dedicated, above all, to them and to the indispensable work of enlightenment, development and solidarity in which they are engaged. Let us all join them in this great undertaking.

Federico Mayor, the Director-General of Unesco, delivered this message on the occasion of International Literacy Day, September 8, 1988.

Editors' Note:

From the Field regularly features letters from correspondents working in rural communities. To commemorate the advent of International Literacy Year, we've decided to break with our tradition and reproduce this special message from the Director-General of UNESCO.

Where to Get Further Information on International Literacy Year (ILY)

Unesco

National Committees

National committees will be set up to promote ILY in countries around the world. These will be both governmental and non-governmental bodies and will be responsible for planning and organizing activities for ILY at the national level. For further information regarding national government committees contact: ILY Secretariat, Unesco, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, FRANCE. Tel: 4568-1000.

Publications

Unesco is producing several publications to mark ILY:

- *Objective: Literacy*, an illustrated digest will be published by mid-1989 and will be available from Unesco, Paris (see address above).
- Unesco's education journal, *Prospects*, is planning a special issue on progress and problems in literacy promotion.
- Unesco will publish a special issue of its monthly *Courier* in 1990 on ILY.
- *A Guide to ILY* for member states will be available by November 1989 from Unesco headquarters in Paris.
- *A Practical Guide to ILY* for NGOs, Unesco Clubs, Associated Schools and other interested groups is available in English, French and Spanish from the NGO (Unesco) Standing Committee. For more information write to Unesco (see address above).
- A guidebook to printed materials for literacy programs entitled *Illustrated Literacy Material: Some Samples* is available from Unesco Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, P.O.Box 1425, General Post Office, Bangkok 10501, Thailand.

International Task Force on Literacy

The following is a list of members of the International Task Force on Literacy (ITFL), a coalition of international and regional voluntary organizations working together to plan special activities to highlight ILY in 1990. The ITFL cooperates with Unesco's ILY Secretariat.

International Non-Governmental Organizations

- The Baha'i International Community
- Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Services
- Disabled Peoples' International
- International Council for Adult Education
- International Reading Association
- International Union of Students
- Laubach Literacy International
- World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession
- World Council of Churches
- World Council of Indigenous Peoples
- World Education
- World Federation of Unesco Clubs, Associations and Centres
- Women's International Democratic Federation
- World Young Women's Christian Association

Regional Organizations

- African Association for Literacy and Adult Education
- Arab Regional Literacy Organization
- Asian South Pacific Bureau for Adult Education
- Caribbean Regional Council for Adult Education
- Consejo de Educacion de Adultos de America Latina
- European Bureau for Adult Education

Cooperating Bodies

- Canadian International Development Agency German Foundation for International Development
- Swedish International Development Authority
- Norwegian Agency for International Development
- Unesco Institute for Education

Host Country Coooperating Bodies

- Movement for Canadian Literacy
- Regroupement des Groupes Populaires d'Alphabetisation du Quebec

The next meeting of the ITFL will take place in Kenya in April 1989 where more concrete plans for 1990 will be discussed. For more information on events and activities planned for 1990, the ITFL Coordinating Office can be contacted at the following address: ITFL Coordinating Office, 720 Bathurst Street, Ste.500, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2R4, Tel: (416) 588-1211, FAX: (416) 588-5725, TELEX: 06-9886766 TOR.

For information on national NGO committees which will be set up to promote ILY contact the ITFL Coordinating Office (above).

Publications

The International Task Force on Literacy is publishing a monthly newsletter in English, French, and Spanish on news, ideas and projects for ILY. The newsletter will be published through 1991 and is available free of charge from the ITFL Coordinating Office (see address above).

A list of organizations which promote literacy around the world will be available from the ITFL Coordinating Office as of September, 1989.

ICAE

The World Assembly of the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) in January 1990 will have as its theme, "Literacy, Popular Education and Democracy".

Convergence, ICAE's international journal of adult education, will devote its first issue of 1990 to the theme of literacy. Deadline for article submissions is May 31, 1989. Write to editor Karen Yarmol-Franko at the ICAE address under ITFL above.

The ICAE's Women's Program plans to publish a special issue of its bulletin, *Voice's Rising*, on literacy in October/November of 1989. For further information, contact: Carol-Anne O'Brien, Bulletin Coordinator, The ICAE Women's Program, c/o Participatory Research Group, Suite 308, 394 Euclid Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6G 2S9.

World Literacy Canada

Developing Freedom a play jointly produced by World Literacy Canada and Young People's Theatre will travel to nearly three hundred high schools and communities across Canada from the fall of 1989 into 1990. The play honors ILY 1990 and will be accompanied by an outreach educator and a learning materials kit. For more information contact: World Literacy Canada, 692 Coxwell Ave., Toronto, Ontario M4C3B6.

Correction:

The article *Superwoman in the Third World*, ***Reports*** No. 27, attributed to Elayne Clift and Merle Goldberg was compiled by the editors from a selection of the authors' writings. Also, the attribution incorrectly identified Merle Goldberg, who is founder and former Executive Director of the International Women's Health Coalition. She serves on the Board of the NCIH and is a free-lance writer specializing in women and development.

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